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THE CARIBBEAN BASIN:
U.S. STRATEGY AND SECURITY CHALLENGES IN THE
21ST CENTURY

by

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Preface

As the U.S. transitions from the Cold War era into a post Cold War “economic development” environment, the Caribbean Basin runs the risk of fading from the policy attention of the United States even though it is a region to which the United States is inextricably linked by both proximity and history—and the one in which the U.S has had the most military interventions.

As a U.S. Air Force officer, born in the Caribbean I found it appropriate to undertake this project given the limited attention paid to the region in discussions on the global strategic environment. I envisioned this project as a means of exploring past and current U.S policy toward the region, determine its importance, if any, to the U.S. and identify and analyze some of the challenges that could impact the relationship between the U.S. and Caribbean as we head into the 21st century.

I would like to acknowledge the experts who, regardless of the marginalization of the region, continue to dedicate their time and efforts in exploring its past and conceptualizing its future. I’d also like to thank my family for being patient as I collected information and worked on this paper. Finally, I would like to thank my Faculty Research Advisor for his honest and constructive critiques and his assistance in crystallizing the concept.

Abstract

At first glance the Caribbean Basin seems to be a fairly peaceful, even benign, region when compared to regions in Africa, the Middle East or Europe. Closer analysis however, reveals a complex, and dynamic grouping of nationalities, cultures, and languages and a myriad of issues and challenges (economic, social and political) that can have an effect on the security landscape of the United States. Contrary to the characterization of benign unimportance, the Caribbean Basin has the distinction of being the region that has experienced the greatest number of U.S. military interventions—37 since 1901. Much of U.S. foreign policy decisions relating to the Caribbean is crisis oriented. However, there are significant transnational threats that the U.S. must pay attention to, if it is to avoid another Haiti or Cuba.

Chapter 1 is an introduction. Chapter 2 is a geopolitical overview and discussion of the region's value to the United States. Chapter 3 is a historical perspective on U.S. policy and interventions in the region since the Cold War. Chapter 4 discusses three of the challenges to U.S. security emanating from the region and postulates strategies for their resolution. Chapter 5 is a summary of findings and the conclusion.

Sadly, my research results indicates that current administration policy, as other administration policies of the past, still lack the vision, strategic thinking and long range planning that will maximize the opportunities for true stability in the region or effectively resolve the challenges that may affect U.S.-Caribbean relations.

Chapter 1

Background

Introduction and Problem Definition

“The Fiscal Year 1983 Posture statement of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff expressed the following concern: It is becoming increasingly clear that a secure [Western] hemisphere is no longer a forgone conclusion and the U.S. must play an active and enlightened role in hemispheric affairs. Specifically, the U.S. can no longer view Latin America [and the Caribbean] as a Third World area removed from the traditional focus of U.S. strategy, the area must be seen as a contiguous region whose future bears directly on the security of the Hemisphere as a whole.”¹

Approximately 15 years have past since that assessment; and U.S policy makers have not heeded the message. U.S. policy toward in the region can still be defined as “traditional” in approach.” Under this approach, a clearly defined range of options designed to address the region’s critical issues have not been established. The U.S. response to security issues in the Caribbean Basin have tended to stress the strategic and military aspects of the security dilemma while intentionally or unintentionally downplaying the broader issues of geopolitics, economics, and transnational threats.

“Historically, U.S. concern over security (military and strategic) in the Western Hemisphere in general, and the Caribbean in particular, have tended to be crisis-oriented,

rising as a threat is perceived and then sinking to a lower level of priority or benign neglect as the crisis passes.”² However, a number of changed circumstances and new realities are challenging this “traditional” approach to security issues in the Caribbean.

U.S.-Caribbean relations face an uncertain future as we move into the 21st century. Although the U.S. leadership role in the region is recognized, there is now a greater sense that the security relationship must be based on true mutual interests rather than on ones defined primarily by the United States. As the U.S. changes its focus from predominantly global issues to more regional ones, pressures to develop economic opportunities will increase its involvement and generate greater (but unwanted) attention to regional issues. Conversely, the perception that the U.S. is not truly concerned about resolving the region’s deeper social, economic and political ills (the root causes of discontent) will doubtlessly elicit a disappointed and disillusioned response to U.S. overtures.³

Based on this premise, future U.S.-Caribbean relations will be characterized by a heightened Caribbean sensitivity to U.S. dominance. Sentiments of which may be exhibited in various ways—ranging from increased concerns about cultural penetration and domination, to resistance on U.S. policy requests regarding cooperation on issues that may pose threats to the security of United States from the region. What is needed, if the U.S. is to avoid the policy missteps of the past and prevent new sources of crisis and instability from developing in the Post-Cold war environment, is an adjustment in planning, doctrine and resource allocation relating to the region.⁴

Thesis Statement and Research Scope

This vision of the future raises several important questions. Is the Caribbean still important to the security of the United States given the changing global environment? If so, what policy approaches are needed by the U.S to ensure regional stability without violating the sovereignty and will of its neighbors?

Given the Caribbean's proximity to the United States, its valuable strategic mineral resources, and the importance of its Sea Lines Of Communications to the economic security of the United States, there is still a remarkable absence of attention to the region from policymakers. It is this lack of a structured framework and the continued marginalization of the region that has led to a piecemeal policy approach and lack of preparedness for crises in the hemisphere.

The concepts of long term democratic development and economic reform must form the overarching context of U.S.-Caribbean relations and form the subtext for dealing with issues that now present the most significant security threats to the U.S. from the region: illegal narcotics, immigration and refugee problems, degradation of the environment, democratic governance, and the integration and role of Caribbean Basin in the international community.

First, this paper will provide a geopolitical overview of the region. Second, it will review examples of past policy and intervention in the region. Third, it will address the new challenges facing the U.S. in the first half of the 21st century. Although there are several noted above, this analysis will focus on what the author considers the most significant: drug-trafficking, immigration and refugee problems, and environmental degradation. Finally, given the asymmetry in power between the United States and the

Caribbean, the analysis attempts to determine what policy prescriptions can be developed that will ensure a workable relationship with the Caribbean. This paper is primarily an analysis of writings on U.S.-Caribbean foreign policy and draws from the perspectives of several U.S. and Caribbean foreign policy experts.

Notes

¹ Green and Scowcroft, *Western Interests and U.S. Policy Options in the Caribbean*, OG&H, Boston, Ma., p.143, 1984

² Ibid. p. 147.

³ Ivelaw L. Griffith, *Caribbean Security on the Eve of the 21st Century*, McNair Paper 54, Oct 96, p10

⁴ Fauriol, Gerorges., *The Third Century: US Latin American Policy Choices for the 1990s*. Center for Strategic and International Studies, VolX., Number13.

Chapter 2

A Geopolitical Overview

The Caribbean Basin is a complex geographic and political region (See Figure 1)¹. It includes the islands of the Caribbean Sea and those nearby in the Atlantic Ocean, the Central American isthmus, and the north coast of South America extending into the Atlantic Ocean (including Columbia, Venezuela and Surinam). The area has its own further sub-regions, notably the Central American and Commonwealth Caribbean countries. The Commonwealth Caribbean countries are the 18 English-speaking entities in the Caribbean Basin. Of that number, 12 have gained their independence from Britain—Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, St Kitts-Nevis, St Lucia, St. Vincent, and Trinidad and Tobago. One of them (Belize) is on the Central American Isthmus, another (Guyana) is on the South American Continent, and the rest are islands in the Caribbean Sea. The non-sovereign countries have a constitutional status of “States in Association with Great Britain.” They are self-governing but dependent on the United Kingdom for external affairs. They are Angullia, Bermuda, British Virgin Islands, Cayman Islands, Montserrat, and the Turks and Caicos Islands. The Central American states are made up of the six traditional isthmian states of Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Panama and Nicaragua.

Three other countries, Cuba, Haiti, and the Dominican Republic make up the island states of the Caribbean Basin region.

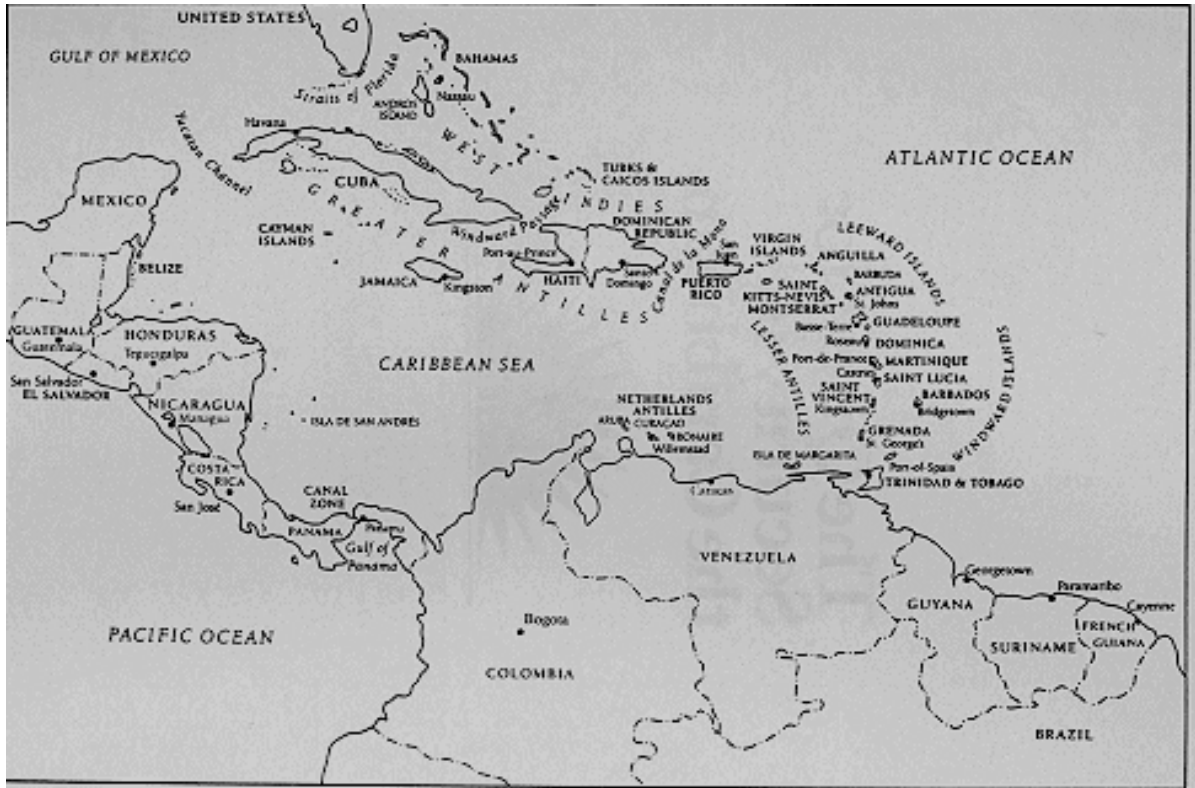


Figure 1. Map of the Caribbean

Throughout the twentieth century the United States has pursued a hegemonic presence in the region, with unilateral military interventions. The recent collapse of the Soviet Union removed concerns about a credible external threat to the region. As a result, the strategic importance of the region in the planning and strategy considerations of U.S. policymakers has also declined. But no more compelling example exists of the costs of complacency, than Castro's aging revolutionary government—the Soviet Union's first high priority Latin interest. Cuba's continuing impact on US security policy highlights the fact that the Caribbean, in recent decades, has continued to trigger direct U.S. military responses—Grenada (1983), Panama (1989) and Haiti as recently as 1994.

According to Ivelaw L. Griffith, noted political scientist, “small states, subordinate to the foreign policy and security actions of larger neighbors and other important state and non-state actors, are vulnerable.”² He surmises that vulnerability can eventually lead to the disruption of democratic governance and the resurgence of security challenges on the southern flank of United States.

To the uninitiated, the question might then be why should a country as powerful as the U.S. be concerned with these seemingly insignificant nations on its southern flank? A closer look at the region’s location and resources of may help to answer that question.

Value of the Caribbean to U.S Security

There are two significant aspects U.S.-Caribbean relations; one is the fact that the Caribbean Basin is the location of key strategic access routes to the U.S., Latin America and other regions of the world, the other is the region’s strategic material resources. The strategic interests of the United States in the Caribbean and therefore the heart of U.S. policy in the region have been the protection of those resources and the deterrence of any hostile extra- or intra-hemispheric power from establishing a military or geopolitical foothold.. To this end the U.S. has adhered to a single basic principle: the Caribbean Sea, linking the mainland U.S. with the Antilles and Central America, by proximity, is part of the general terrain of U.S hemispheric security.³

Sea Lines of Communication

The Caribbean is host to key Sea Lines of Communications (SLOCs) for trade to and from the United States as well as for power projection in the Atlantic and toward Europe and Central and South America. It also provides access to U. S. investments in the

region, as well as energy and mineral resources. With the decline of the Soviet threat, the Panama Canal is now considered by many military analysts as being no longer of significant strategic importance. The primary reason being cited are the physical features of the Canal, given the increasing size of military vessels. The Canal however, has historically been a vital military SLOC. It was crucial to the movement of ships to the European and North African theaters during World War II. It was vital to supply lines during the Korean War and it was heavily used during the Vietnam War, at the peak of the Conflict, over 1,500 ships passed through each year.⁴

Regardless of its seemingly decreasing strategic role in military planning, the Canal is still vital to U.S. economic interests. Over 93 percent of the of the world ocean going vessels are able to pass through the waterway and each year, there are some 12,000 ships transit carrying more than 150 million tons of cargo to all parts of the globe.⁵ Once ships leave the Panama Canal from the Pacific Ocean they must use one or more of the Caribbean Sea passages en-route to destinations in the United States, Europe, Africa and elsewhere. The Windward Passage, Florida Strait, Mona Passage and the Yucatan Channel are the principal gateways for ships entering or leaving the Caribbean. Moreover, the Florida Strait offers the only opening sea link to the Gulf of Mexico. The strategic importance of the Caribbean Sea predates the creation of the Panama Canal, and it will continue to play an important role in the economic success of the U.S. It's the bridge between North and South America and a critical link to all hemispheres of the globe. The Caribbean Sea lies at what has been labeled the "Vortex of America." (See Figure 2.)



Source: Joseph H. Strodder and Kevin F. McCarthy, *Profiles of the Caribbean Basin in 1960/1980: Changing Geopolitical and Geostrategic Dimensions*, Rand Corporation, N-2058-AF, December 1983, p.4.

Figure 2. Sea Lines of Communications

Strategic Materials and Access.

Caribbean states own and produce resources important to both U.S military and economic purposes. There are oil, bauxite, gold, nickel, copper, cobalt and other natural resources in the region. Additionally, countries to the south of the region specifically Brazil, has a variety of strategic and non-strategic minerals, including manganese, dolomite, uranium, tungsten, and chromium.⁶ It is important to note the uses of some of these materials. In the military area, bauxite is important in a variety of military vehicles, and for ammunition. For example, a single engine for the F-15 or F-16 fighters uses 720 pound of aluminum, which is refined from bauxite. Cobalt is crucial for making jet engine turbines blades, landing gears, engine mounts, and other components. It's also vital to the production of missile controls, precision rollers, and recoil springs for tanks.

Uranium is crucial for the production of nuclear energy and nuclear weapons. In the case of chromium, every F-15 jet contains about 1,656 pounds of this material.⁷

In the non-military area, petroleum is used for gasoline, heating, chemical, and plastics. Cobalt is used in carbides, magnets, and alloys, manganese in batteries and in the steel industry. There are also several critical aspects of the petroleum industry in the Caribbean and Latin America: production, refining, and transshipment. In fact, the largest refining operations in the world are in the U.S. Virgin Islands. “The Caribbean has been highly regarded as a refining center because of its political stability, its deep water harbors, its lack of environmental regulation and its proximity to major shipping lanes and the Panama Canal.”⁸

Countries close to the Caribbean also supply key minerals to the United States. Brazil and Mexico, for instance provide approximately 16 percent of the manganese imports that enter the United States. Manganese is one of the few minerals for which the U.S. is totally dependent on foreign sources since it has no deposits. Brazil also supplies about one-third of U.S. columbium needs, and is one of only 18 sources for Tantalum to the U.S., second only to Canada. Both minerals are critical to the aerospace industry since there are no substitute for tantalum in the control systems of jet engines.

The resource capacity of the Caribbean and neighboring countries, coupled with the resource needs of the United States, make it relatively easy to appreciate the region’s strategic value to the United States. Yet, despite the importance of these resources, the U.S. has dedicated few resources to protecting these interests. Even with its critical SLOCs and strategic resources, the U.S. continues to marginalize its smaller neighbors to the south.. Unless concerted efforts are made to address the root causes of their

underdevelopment, the result will be threats to U.S. security and stability. There must be a new awareness by the United States of the dangers to its own prosperity and regional peace and order posed by the destabilizing effects of non-military threats from the region.⁹

The following chapter will explore U.S foreign policy and military interventions in the region over the last three decades and their impact on policy as the twenty-first century approaches.

Notes

¹ Ivelaw L. Griffith, *Quest for Security in the Caribbean*, New York, M.E. Sharpe Inc, 1993.

² Ivelaw L. Griffith, *Caribbean Security on the Eve of the 21st Century*, McNair Paper 54, Oct 96, p. 3

³ Muniz and Beruff, U.S Military Policy Toward the Caribbean. *Annals of the American Academy*, May 1994, p.113

⁴ See *Strategic Importance of the Panama Canal*, pp. 61-62, 5-6; and Schoultz, *National Security*, pp. 216-18

⁵ Ivelaw L. Griffith, *Quest for Security in the Caribbean*, New York, M.E. Sharpe Inc, 1993, p177

⁶ *South America. Central America, and the Caribbean 1988*, London: Europa Publications, 1987, pp.197-98, 203.

⁷ Lars Schoultz, *National Security and the United States Policy toward Latin America*, Princeton University Press, 1987, pp. 149-51 and *McGraw Hill Encyclopedia of Science and Technology*, 6th ed., New York: McGraw Hill Books, 1987, p.232.

⁸ Barry, Wood and Preusch, *The Other Side of Paradise*, New York: Grove Press, 1984, p.89

⁹ Anthony T. Bryan, *Changes in Western Hemispheric Security: A Caribbean Perspective*, Evolving US Strategy for Latin America and the Caribbean, National Defense University Press p.135, 1992

Chapter 3

Policies and Interventions

Referred to as the “backyard,” the “American Mediterranean,” and even more recently, the “front porch” of the United States, the Caribbean Basin is the only region, where military presence and intervention has been constant¹. Beginning with its independence in 1873, one of the basic security concerns of the United States has been the defense of its frontiers. In fact, the United States security relationship with the Caribbean predates the early days of the War of Independence. The American colonists relied heavily on weapons and gunpowder purchased from merchants in the Caribbean to keep the fledgling rebellion alive. Since that time U.S., Caribbean, and Latin American security interests have been linked. For most of that time, the United States has viewed the region as a possible arena for subversion or larger conflicts involving non-regional powers—British, French, Spanish, German or Soviet. That paradigm has remained from the War of Independence through the days of the Monroe Doctrine, the Spanish American War, World War II, the Cold War with its Cuban Missile Crisis and into the Post-Cold War.

Revolution of Expectations

At the end of WW II the Caribbean and Latin America emerged with high expectations for a more prosperous future. In their grand struggle against totalitarianism,

the republics to the south had dutifully subordinated their economies to the services of the United States and had accumulated both goodwill and dollar reserves. There was great optimism about their role in the postwar global concerns of the United States.²

But after 1945, the interests of the United States and the hemispheric republics diverged. For the most part, the U.S. wanted an orderly hemisphere, loyal to its cold war policies but undemanding of economic aid. The republics, by contrast, were impressed with American military and economic might and their expectation of high priority in Washington's global strategy soon turned to bitter disillusion. From the U.S. point of view, the central and southern half of the hemisphere, geographically remote from the European and Asian theaters of the East-West conflict, were presumed free of communism. These fledgling states however, abandoned by the U.S. and beset by economic and social pressures were burdened with the profound task of adjustment to a modern world--aptly characterized as the "revolution of rising expectations."³

Cold War Policy and Intervention

Eisenhower Administration

As these pressures of reform were being expressed by the states in the region, America's attention was focused on other hemispheres. It was within the context of such inattentiveness that communist ideology began to flex its muscle in the Caribbean. The fact that such a threat could exist in its own "backyard" suddenly made the region one of primary concern for Washington policy makers. President Truman and later Eisenhower, began to define America's chief responsibility in the region as one of protection against communist encroachment. What policymakers failed to realize then and still today, is

that the roots of revolution and instability grow from inequality and injustices and these issues must be addressed if instability is to diminish. United States policy at the time however, was focused on the symptoms. Communism had to be stopped and anticommunist governments supported. The result of this approach was the signing of a series of agreements the most significant of which was the Rio Treaty. The Treaty provided for the collective security of the region and served as the model for the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. The leaders of the countries of the Caribbean and Latin America continued to voice concern over the impact of poverty and lack of modernization in their countries and continually asked the United States to rescue them, as it had the Europeans. U.S. policymakers failed or refused to respond and turned a deaf ear to these requests.⁴

It was in 1954 that United States policymakers got a sampling of what can happen when social and economic problems are left unchecked. After a left wing revolution in Guatemala in 1944, the government began to institute a number of fundamental reforms to improve conditions in the country. Failing to successfully apply the economic and political instruments of power to nullify the revolt, President Eisenhower used the military to put an end to the revolution. Using Honduras and Nicaragua as staging bases, the U.S launched a covert attack to bring the government down. Although the invasion was by most standards a success⁵, the crushing of the revolution did not quell the social and economic pressures that were building in the region. The frequent complaints by those countries that the U.S. must address the root causes of unrest went unheeded.

As the decade of the 1960s approached, the U.S. would face even more heightened revolutionary activity and increasing pressure to address the social and economic sources

of unrest. The U.S however remained focused on the communist threat posed by leftist guerrillas and continued to view violent disruptions in terms of communist expansion. In a half-hearted attempt to address development issues, U.S. foreign policy took on a more complex character with concerns for economic and social issues competing with containment as the official response to revolutionary change in the region. This fundamental dichotomy in the relationship would serve as the background for America's greatest test in the hemisphere: the Cuban revolution of Fidel Castro.

Kennedy Administration

As John F. Kennedy entered the White House in January 1961, he faced a Cuban nation that was clearly anti-American and moving closer to the Soviet sphere of influence. An even more serious consequence of Castro's revolution was that it provided the Caribbean and Latin American countries with a viable alternative to the democratic-capitalist development model. With Cuba moving closer the Soviet Union and gaining popularity in the hemisphere, there was great pressure on President Kennedy to counteract the new Marxist state off the American Coast. Early in his administration, President Kennedy was informed by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) that a plan to stage an invasion of Cuba using anti-Castro rebels had been developed and approved by President Eisenhower. A CIA analysis of the Castro regime showed that the Cuban leader was vulnerable to such a surprise attack.

With some reservations about U.S. involvement in the invasion, he gave the go-ahead for the plan. On April 19, 1961, some 1,500 rebels landed from a makeshift armada off the Cuban coast. Almost immediately, the invasion proved to be ill advised and poorly planned. The rebel forces faced intense resistance from the local militia, no

popular support for the invaders materialized and the promised air cover from U.S. planes was insufficient. Within hours, the invasion was over and 1,200 of the rebels were captured.⁶

The intervention led to outrage amongst the nations of the hemisphere and had the effect of generating greater support for Castro in the region. By 1962, the Cuban leader had brought the revolution into close alignment with the objectives of the Soviet Union and Cuba quickly became the second most powerful military force in the hemisphere and a Soviet outpost 100 miles from the United States. The Soviet arms buildup in Cuba soon led to one of the most dangerous instances of confrontation between the United States and the Soviet Union since the conclusion of World War II--the Cuban Missile Crisis.

In October 1962, U.S. reconnaissance flights over Cuba took pictures of newly constructed missile emplacements that military analysts were convinced could be used to launch an attack against the United States. President Kennedy placed the military on alert and sent navy ships to quarantine Cuba so that no additional weapons would reach the Castro regime. The tough stance taken by the Kennedy administration placed the world on the brink of nuclear war. The Soviets fortunately were not willing to challenge the U.S. show of force and agreed to discontinue work on the missile sites and dismantle those missiles already in place.

An analysis of the underlying causes of Castro's revolution and by extension the missile crisis, reveals that the U.S had once again failed to recognize or just simply ignored the symptoms of instability in the region. Castro's revolution gained the support of the people because it was an attempt to bring about economic change and social

justice. The U.S. had continued to support the Batista government that had a reputation for harsh rule and corrupt administration. After the crisis abated, the Kennedy administration began providing assistance and training to countries in the region threatened by revolution. The focus however, was not on the reforms needed to ensure economic and political stabilization, but on the use of local militaries to foster development projects as a means of winning the hearts and minds of rural peasants.

Contemporary Policies and Interventions

Reagan Administration

The Reagan Administration, instead of stressing human rights as several administrations before it, took a hard line approach in dealing with the states of the Caribbean and Latin America. Although the revolution in El Salvador occupied much of the president's attention, his administration saw the implications of the effects of communist revolution in the hemisphere and responded with both economic and military initiatives. Perhaps the most highly publicized program of foreign assistance since Kennedy's Alliance for Progress was President Reagan's Caribbean Basin Initiative (CBI) of 1981. Designed as a means of responding to communist inspired revolution through a comprehensive trade and aid policy, the CBI brought Central America and the Caribbean together as a strategic region (President Reagan called it our "third border") that would benefit from more liberal access to U.S. markets, greater economic assistance, and more incentives for capital investment.

But even while attempting to establish an effective barrier to communism through economic and military aid, the powerful reach of communist influence and control

touched the tiny Caribbean island of Grenada. In the fall of 1983, the socialist Prime Minister of Grenada, Maurice Bishop, was replaced by a faction of his party that pledged to develop closer ties to Cuba and the Soviet Union. The murder of Bishop in addition to the fact that Bishop's government had accepted a Cuban offer to build an airstrip on the island made the Reagan administration uncomfortable. They [Reagan administration] believed that the new airstrip would be used in the future to land Soviet jets and troop transports, touching off a period of even greater uncertainty in the region. This moved the Reagan administration to action. On October 25, 1983, President Reagan, citing the need to protect U.S. students on the island ordered the military into the country. After a few days of fighting, the U.S. forces secured the island. Nineteen U.S. soldiers were killed and scores were injured.

Support for the military action from the region was mixed. As President Reagan left office, the conclusion of many observers was that his administration had made a bold attempt to control events in the region, but in the end, the lack of a concerted effort by the U.S. to address the needs of the people meant that countries would no longer be intimidated by the power of the U.S. The failure to dictate an effective solution to the Grenada crisis pointed up the limitations of the power of the United States and the changing nature of the relationship with states in the region.⁷

Bush Administration

The election of George Bush ushered in a host of new challenges for U.S. policy in the Caribbean. The war on drugs had reached a new plateau; the debt crisis of countries in the area remained unabated and was joined by the twin specters of inflation and social disorder. As 1989 came to a close the administration was reminded that despite the

positive developments in Eastern Europe and the growing rapport between the United States and the Soviet Union, the real trouble spots were in its own backyard.

The first test for the administration came in the form of a rigged election in Panama. President Manuel Noriega, leader of Panama had crushed the democratic movement in Panama despite condemnation from the Bush administration and most of the leaders in the region. In December 1989, President Bush's patience with the nonmilitary solutions to the Noriega narco-dictatorship came to an abrupt end. After a marine lieutenant was killed by Noriega's Panamanian Defense Force and other military personnel were beaten up, the president gave the go ahead to an invasion of Panama. In what was the largest military operation since Vietnam U.S. troops captured President Noriega, neutralized his forces and installed a democratic government. Although supported by the Congress and the American people, the Caribbean and Latin American response was quite different. The Bush administration was condemned for resorting to the traditional weapon of intervention and for its unwillingness to permit the countries of the region to solve their own problems.

Although Bush's crowning achievement was his handling of the Gulf War, his policies in the Caribbean provided a solid foundation for the future development of the region. The invasion of Panama, the removal of Noriega, the winding down of the war in El Salvador, the transition to democracy in Nicaragua, the drug summits and the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) formed a legacy that if capitalized could, in the minds of many Caribbeanists, provide the underpinnings of democratic governance in the region.

Clinton Administration

The election of Bill Clinton in 1992 resulted in a thorough review of U.S foreign policy in the Caribbean. The Clinton administration was reluctant to transform the U.S. into a military meddler but was more than eager to develop policies that advanced U.S. standing in the global economy. Like President Bush, he viewed NAFTA as the centerpiece of new economic ties between the United States and the rest of the hemisphere. Although the success of NAFTA helped to secure the concepts of free trade and regionalism, the Clinton administration faced a new series of challenges.

In Guatemala, and Venezuela, the Clinton administration intervened in political affairs. They forced the Guatemalan president from assuming broad dictatorial powers as part of his reforms and eventually marshaled support for his removal from office. Additionally, they protested the attempted military overthrow of the Venezuelan government and through diplomatic pressure helped restore order. In both cases, the U.S. was seen as properly using its influence—diplomatic and economic to protect the rule of law and the wishes of the people.

These successes however, were over shadowed by the dilemma in Haiti. The military government in Haiti refused to abide the election of Jean-Bertrand Aristide in 1992. The Clinton administration led the effort to have the populist priest returned to power but failed to do so through boycott or embargo. In September 1994, after a last ditch effort by former President Jimmy Carter, along with Colin Powell and Senator Sam Nunn and the launch of U.S. invasion forces toward the island the coup leaders agreed to a peaceful exit from the island. Although seen as a peaceful entry, U.S. troops remained in Haiti for

over one year in order to ensure democracy was not threatened by anti-democratic elements.

Since the Haiti crisis ended, the focus of the Clinton administration has returned to global economic development. In December 1994, President Clinton invited the heads of state of 34 countries in the region to his much-heralded Summit of the Americas to discuss issues critical to the hemisphere beyond 2000. President Clinton labeled the event “as a watershed moment for the hemisphere” and pledged that the U.S. would work to achieve a trade zone by 2005.

But even as the Clinton administration make overtures to the Caribbean for expanding economic opportunity, there is a consensus among many who monitor inter-American affairs, that the Clinton administration still have not learned the lessons of the past. The administration they contend, continue to view the region as having marginal influence on the course of U.S. foreign policy and as a result, pay only lip service to the Caribbean. The Clinton administration they believe, in neglecting the region, will miss the subtle clues to instability that underlie the challenges facing both the United States and the nations on its southern flank.

Although this chapter presents only a few brief examples of past policy approaches and the resulting military interventions in the Caribbean, they underscore the fact that the U.S. has failed to develop and implement an effective, long term policy for the region. Caribbean history is replete with such examples and supports the contention that solutions to problems and challenges cannot be manufactured in Washington and imposed on the Caribbean. The U.S., working in tandem with the Caribbean nations, must help the region find ways to sustain economic and political self-sufficiency. Failure

to find solutions will result in the eruption of new crises, more policy failures and even the loss of American lives. The question experts on the Caribbean ask is; not if such crisis will occur, but when, and will the U.S. be prepared? The following chapter explores some of the challenges that may lead to such crises.

Notes

¹ Ivelaw L. Griffith, *Caribbean Security on the Eve of the 21st Century*, NDU Press, Oct 96, p. 3

² Lester D. Langley, *The United States and the Caribbean in the Twentieth Century*, (Athens, Georgia 1989) , p.171

³ Roger R Trask, "The impact of the Cold War on United States –Latin American Relations, 1945-1949," *Diplomatic History 1* (Summer 1997): 271-84

⁴ Michael J. Kryzanek, *U.S.-Latin American Relations* (Westport , CT.,1996), p. 62

⁵ Ibid, p. 65

⁶ Tad Szulc and Karl E. Meyer, *The Cuban Invasion: The Chronicle of Disaster* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1962)

⁷ Ibid p.103

Chapter 4

Challenges and Prescriptions

Challenges

Where is the U.S.-Caribbean relationship headed as we enter the early part of the 21st century? It is obvious why the United States is important to the Caribbean. But what is the importance of the Caribbean to U.S. interests? Traditionally, the Caribbean has been important to U.S. security, but that answer is no longer adequate in the post-Cold War era. The shift from geopolitics, with its emphasis on containing communism, to geoeconomics is now the yardstick by which this relationship will be measured. As the international system evolves, outlines of new security issues--menaces to the survival of these democratic societies--are rising to the top of the international agenda. Drug trafficking, immigration and refugee problems and the environment are among the most urgent.¹

Drug-trafficking

The most conspicuous challenge to U.S.-Caribbean relations is the trafficking of narcotics and the strong possibility that it may lead to the emergence of “narco-democracies” in the region. The three main ‘danger drugs’ are cocaine, heroin and marijuana, but only marijuana is cultivated in the region. Belize, Guyana, Jamaica, and

Trinidad and Tobago are among the countries with the highest levels of marijuana production. The use of cocaine and heroine results from a spill over from the illicit trade. Apart from the trade of their own production, the countries noted above, in addition to the Bahamas, Barbados, the Dominican Republic, and Haiti, feature prominently in the trafficking of cocaine and heroin.² By some estimates, 40 percent of all South American cocaine and heroine destined for the U.S. moves through the Caribbean. Corruption and domestic violence connected with the trade is expected to increase and the Clinton administration consistently criticized many of the countries in the region for not doing enough to stem the flow of drugs.

Although most countries in the region have pledged to cooperate with the U.S. in the counter-drug efforts, some of the steps taken by the U.S. have been perceived as having breached national sovereignty and transgressed the limits of extraterritorial jurisdiction, provoking hostility on the part of both the governments and general public of some of these nations. A case in point is the Maritime and Overflight (shipriders) Agreement, which is intended to stem the intra-regional flow of drugs. The Agreement permits land and sea patrols by vessels of both the Navy and Coast Guard, maritime searches, as well as seizure and arrests by U.S. law enforcement authorities within the national boundaries of Caribbean countries.³

Most Caribbean leaders are unhappy at the manner in which the U.S. is attempting to stem the flow of drugs through the region. They do not dispute the need to control the illegal traffic but resent the pressure over how to fight the trade. There is also further concern that current anti-drug strategies of the U.S. will impinge on the national sovereignty and the independent legal systems of these states.

The drug traffic and production of illegal narcotics are not only a security problem for Caribbean nations, it places a social and economic burden on the U.S. as well. It is imperative that U.S. policy makers recognize that for Caribbean nations the problem is a symptom of profound economic crisis. Today, illegal narcotics are the most profitable business in the informal sector of Caribbean communities. In addition, the domestic abuse and consumption of these drugs is a serious threat to both human development and social well being in these nations. The collateral damage that the drug trade produces represents a danger to democracy in the entire hemisphere.

Immigration

Another significant transnational issue which will play a major role in affecting U.S.-Caribbean relations in the early 21st century is immigration and the accompanying refugee problems. Immigration is a politically charged issue in the United States. The relatively small amounts of both legal and illegal immigrants from the Eastern Caribbean are been easily absorbed. However, it is the massive migration of boat people fleeing the economic and political conditions in Haiti and Cuba that remains a specter haunting both politicians and American citizens. The most significant immigration problem—mass inflows of refugees—arise from the same core problems that have created regional instability in the past. Political repression, turmoil, and economic despair. Cuba and Haiti will probably continue to be the dominant contributors to tensions on this issue. A lot will depend on the continuing success of the Haitian government in strengthening the country's legitimate government and civil order and how the impending political transition in Cuba unfolds. It will also depend on whether other nations in the region continue to enjoy political stability and avoid suffering sharp economic declines. The

most constructive approach to this problem is the active engagement of both the U.S. and Caribbean nations in appreciating the magnitude of the problem from each other's viewpoint while actively engaging in the search for solutions to regional political, economic and social issues.

Environmental Degradation

The two challenges previously discussed are the ones that have received the most attention in the media. However, there is another challenge on the horizon with the potential for global implications. That challenge is environmental degradation. If current trends continue, the 21st century will see a doubling of the global population, with most of the growth occurring in developing countries. The impact of such expansion on an already stressed environment could be catastrophic if not handled properly. Solutions must be found to foster environmentally sustainable development. Environmental degradation must be placed on the security agenda for two reasons. First, environmental mismanagement in the Caribbean will exacerbate the scarcity of critical resources and this will become a source of conflict—as resources dwindle, internal struggles to control them will lead to discontent and even civil war. At the other end of the spectrum, scarcity of resources resulting from environmental degradation may rekindle long standing territorial disputes—Peru and Ecuador, Venezuela and Guyana, El Salvador and Honduras and Honduras and Nicaragua are but a few examples. Second, the scale of human activity around the globe is at the point where national solutions will not suffice—events in one nation can have a profound effect on others—we see this phenomenon in Brazil and other countries as the rain forest is depleted⁴. The question here is what will the U.S. response be to the environmental policies of other countries whose

environmental decisions may directly impact the American way of life? If conflict in hemispheric relations is to be avoided, it will be essential for both the U.S. and Caribbean nations to address environmental issues in the context of security, stability, and sustainability.

The manner in which (politically, militarily or economically) the United States and the nations of the Caribbean respond to these challenges will determine the future of their relationship in the 21st century. If we use history as a guide, then the relationship is likely to be rocky and uncertain. The Clinton administration and future U.S. policymakers will have to reassess the traditional approach to regional foreign policy. The U.S. must devise strategies to discern, diagnose and respond to the needs of its smaller neighbors as they seek to define their place in the international community, while, at the same time, ensuring the cooperation necessary to resolve its own major security concerns of narcotics, immigration, and the environment.

Prescriptions

As trends and characteristics of the new emerging international order develop, they suggest a disturbing fluidity and uncertainty about the future. The Caribbean region like much of developing world, is still a spectator to this transformation. Efforts must be made by the international community in general and the U.S. in particular to integrate these small states into the international community. Caribbean states may find the strains of an individual, independent existence--declines in major economic assistance programs, demands for reciprocal trading relations, reductions in special concessions and allowances, and enormous competitive challenges—progressively harder to support given the realities of the 21st century.

The three challenges previously discussed in this paper are but a few of the myriad of challenges that will impact the U.S.-Caribbean relations in the future. Narcotics production and trafficking, immigration and environmental degradation are symptoms of a greater ill--the lack of a solid economic and political infrastructure. Solutions must be developed that are not only designed to be challenge specific but also address the underlying issues of corruption, poverty, and disillusionment. What then must be done to resolve these challenges?

A range of strategies to counter the drug production and trafficking problems at the national, regional, and international levels must be employed. These strategies must include interdiction, education, the training of law enforcement officials, demand reduction crop substitution, and effective treatment and rehabilitation. At the national and level the U.S. must assist Caribbean nations with crop substitution, effective treatment, rehabilitation, and education. On the home front, the U.S must focus on the interdiction and demand reduction.

The solutions for solving the issues of immigration and refugees-- the boat people of Haiti, Cubans fleeing Castro's brand of communism or those from the Dominican Republic—are complex. In the past, the reasons for immigration could be presented as being directly related to anti-communism or military build-ups. Today the primary reason is economic disparity, and political repression. To reduce the risk of opening the migration flood gates in the future, the United States will have to take some risks—supporting new governments (Haiti and Cuba) and pressure old allies in the region (Mexico and Dominican Republic) to make concessions. To achieve the goal of a stable, democratic back yard the United States must help Caribbean nations resolve the

underlying causes of instability; poverty and repression. It is this approach which may most successfully lead to a reduction in mass migration from the region.

Foreign policy strategist must also consider another resource in addition to their economic and political resources that could be used as a solution to the two challenges discussed above—the DOD. This solution goes beyond its traditional military role. America's armed forces played a central role in developing the United States during its first century. Today, they have the skills and knowledge required to project their capabilities. DOD resources can be used to assist both military and civilian institutions in the region. The intent will not be to establish a long-term presence, but to apply the skills, experiences, techniques, processes and technologies, to help develop the capabilities of the nations, and then get out.⁵ Such DOD peacetime operations could provide an opportunity for leveraging assets through the use of small, expert teams, to include departmental civilians and contractors. Also, such peacetime operations can foster positive U.S. security partnerships, improve stability, and contribute to sustainable growth in the region.

The issue of environmental degradation will become a greater challenge in the latter half of the 21st century. Help from U.S. and international financial organizations will be essential to repair environmental damage and conserve the integrity of the region. The U.S. in conjunction with Caribbean nations will have to develop strategies to engage environmental advocates in common goals.

The importance of maintaining a stable friendly relationship with the Caribbean cannot be overstated. Present and future policymakers must understand that the political and economic diversity of the region prevents a single comprehensive foreign policy

approach. In the past, national security strategy has separately addressed diplomatic, economic, and military policy. Today, these policies must be systemically integrated and take a long-term approach. The U.S must strengthen the bond with its neighbors to the south because it is in the best interest of a superpower to have stable democratic and prosperous states on its flanks if only to ensure cooperation on resolving major mutual security issues.

Notes

¹ Anthony P. Maingot, *The United States and the Caribbean*, (Colorado: Westview Press, 1994) p. 228

² Jorge Beruff and Humberto Muniz, Ed., *Security Problems and Policies in the Post-Cold War Caribbean*, (New York, St Martin's Press) 1996, pp. 183-85

³ Anthony Bryan, *Clinton Administration and the Caribbean*, *Journal of Int'l Studies and World Affairs*, Spring 97, p. 107

⁴ L. Erik Kjonnerod, *Evolving U.S. Strategy for Latin America and the Caribbean*, (Washington DC, NDU Press, 1992) pp. 116-7

⁵ L. Erik Kjonnerod, *Evolving U.S. Strategy for Latin America and the Caribbean* (Washington D.C., NDU Press) p. 119

Chapter 5

Conclusion

This paper began by describing how the United States has often taken the Caribbean for granted and only responds to the needs of the region in times of crisis. Despite the rhetoric, the security and trade agreements, and the multilateral and regional conferences, the U.S. has never really treated the nations of the Caribbean as allies or friends: appreciating the differences, making few demands and displaying mutual respect. In fact, the U.S. has ignored the opportunities to deepen understanding, and in most cases have only gone through the motions of friendship.

As we head into the 21st century and at least through the year 2010, threats to peace, stability and democracy in the Caribbean and Latin America will come from the political extreme, and deeply-rooted economic, social and political problems. U.S. national interests in the region will probably be the same then as it is today—a commitment to curtail the drug trade, reduce illegal immigration and prevent environmental degradation—but the economic resources to attack the root causes of instability would probably still be lacking. For the stronger nations in the region, this lack of tangible support will result in a tenuous hold on democracy. For the others, however, it may lead to the restoration of instability and authoritarian rule.

A rapidly expanding urban population, with the accompanying socioeconomic problems will continue to be the basis for violent crime, drug abuse and trafficking. Economic hardship in Cuba and Haiti could lead to a massive exodus to relieve political and economic pressures and these conditions will continue to promote immigration, and mismanagement of the environment. In addition the Central American peace process, if not nurtured, could gradually fade, leaving unresolved economic social, political problems and territorial disputes that can undermine democracy and cause political instability—the underlying causes of U.S. intervention in the past.

If the United States is to effectively cope with these complex set of challenges that will emerge from the region in the first part of the 21st century it must adjust. What is needed is vision, strategic thinking and a process of sound, long range planning. The agencies and policymakers responsible for national security as it applies to the Caribbean must do more than react to events, they must actively anticipate threats and needs, and position themselves and the appropriate organizations to respond.

There is total agreement from experts that the efforts to achieve stability is primarily the responsibility of the nations of the Caribbean Basin. Their governments must do all they can to develop their national economies, and combat the forces of drug traffickers that oppose their authority while maintaining their nation's environmental integrity. But if they are to be successful, the United States must assist. The U. S. response, in part, must be to work with the nations in the region to attack the roots of systemic instability—poverty, ignorance and inadequate and uneven economic development. Clearly, this is the approach that is in the best interest of the United States and in keeping with its moral obligation as leader of the democratic world.

Glossary

CBI	Caribbean Basin Initiative
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
DOD	Department of Defense
NAFTA	North American Free Trade Agreement
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
SLOC	Sea Lines of Communications

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